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A FORGOTTEN LANDMARK.

BY J. M. GUINN.

The following article is an extract from a paper read before the Historical Society of Southern California March, 1897, entitled "Forgotten Landmarks." Since then two attempts have been made to secure an appropriation from the California Legislature to erect a tablet marking the spot where the Treaty of Cahuenga was made. Both failed. The outlines of the foundation of the adobe building can still be traced and the owner of the land where it was located several years since offered to donate an acre of land for the site of some suitable monument or tablet marking the place. The authority for calling it the Deserted Ranch House of Cahuenga is found in Bryant's "What I Saw In California. Bryant was a Lieutenant in Fremont's Battalion and afterwards was appointed by General Kearny, Alcalde of San Francisco. He says in his diary January 13 (1847): "We continued our march, and encamped near a deserted rancho at the foot of Couenga plain. Soon after we halted the California peace commissioners appeared and the terms of peace and capitulation were finally agreed upon and signed by the respective parties."

Lieutenant Bryant remained in Los Angeles two weeks. He resigned his commission and returned to San Francisco. In his book he says, "We left Los Angeles late in the afternoon of the 29th of January (1847), with two vaqueros on miserable broken-down horses (the best we could obtain), and encamped at the deserted rancho at the foot of Couenga plain, where the treaty of peace had been concluded. After we had been here some time, two Indians came to the house, who had been sent by the proprietor of the rancho to herd the cattle. Having nothing to eat with us a tempting offer prevailed upon the Indians to milk one of the cows; and we made our supper and our breakfast next morning on milk."

Lieut. Bryant through his narrative uses the term "rancho" for the ranch house of the owner of a rancho and when he speaks of the "deserted rancho", where the treaty was made, he means the deserted ranch house. His spelling of Cahuenga differs from the present orthography. The California Commissioners were Jose Antonio Carrillo, Commandante of Squadron and Agustin Olvera, Diputado. The American Commissioners were P. B. Reading, Major California Battalion, Louis McLane, Commander Artillery and Wm. H. Russell, Ordinance Officer. The Treaty was approved by John C. Fremont, Colonel U. S. Army and Military Commandant

of California, and Andreas Pico, Commandant of Squadron and Chief of the National forces of California.

THE DESERTED RANCH HOUSE OF CAHUENGA.

Of the epochs or more properly the beginning of transition eras in California history few, if any, have a greater importance than that which was ushered in by the making of the Treaty of Cahuenga. And yet so little is its importance known or appreciated that its successive anniversaries pass unnoticed by the press or the people of the State.

Every school boy who has studied the rudiments of American history has heard of those famous landmarks—the Charter Oak of Connecticut and the Elm Tree of Penn's Treaty, but I doubt whether any school boy, or schoolmaster, either, has heard of the ranch house of Cahuenga, where a treaty was made of far greater importance to the country and of vastly more importance to the student of history than the treaty that Penn made with the Indians under the "spreading elm tree," on the banks of the Delaware river. Within the walls of the old ranch house of Cahuenga long since in ruins and its site forgotten was signed a treaty that virtually transferred to the United States nearly half a million square miles of territory—a territory vaster in extent than that possessed by the thirteen colonies at the close of the Revolutionary War—a territory out of which has been carved the states of California, Nevada, Utah, part of Colorado and Wyoming—the territory of Arizona and part of New Mexico.

It is true the agreement made at Cahuenga between the American Commissioners and the Mexican was more in the form of a capitulation or surrender than a treaty for the ceding of territory, but to Pico, Carrillo and Olvera, the Commissioners of the Californians, it was the purchase of peace by the surrender of their country. They recognized in it the final culmination of a decree of destiny to which for years they had felt their country was doomed—that destiny, its acquisition by the United States. Fremont and his Commissioners recognized in it something more than the surrender of a few pieces of artillery and the promise of the Californians to keep the peace and observe their paroles. They regarded California, not as a conquered province held by force of arms, but as a territory that was to be a permanent possession of the United States. The treaty must be ratified by their government, but in view of the well known designs of that government, they well knew that no subsequent arbitrament would take the control of the country from the United States.

The people of the United States regarded the Treaty of Cahuenga as final. Months before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which put an end to the Mexican war had been confirmed at

Queretaro and peace proclaimed at Washington, an army of hardy immigrants from the Western States was pouring over the Sierra Nevadas and deploying on the fertile valleys of California.

For three hundred years Spain and her succedant, Mexico, had guarded with jealous watchfulness their California possessions from the encroachments of England, France, and Russia. How bitter the irony of fate that forced the descendants of the proud cavaliers of Spain to surrender these same cherished possessions to the leader of a half organized mob of hunters, trappers and backwoodsmen, some of whom had not even been mustered into the service of the government to which the surrender had been made, and even more humiliating to the descendant of the proud Castilian—the thought that the surrender had been made to a nation unborn when Spain was mistress of half the Western World.

An eminence near the pass of Alpuzarras in Spain from which Boabdil, the last of the Moorish kings, viewed his lost Grenada—its sun-lighted valley and crystal river—has for four hundred years been known as the "Last Sigh of the Moor." As the proud Carrillo and his compatriots, after the surrender, rode through the pass of Cahuenga, the same feelings of sadness and despondency no doubt overpowered them that forced tears from the vanquished Boabdil. The heights from which they looked down in sorrow upon the sun-kissed valleys of their native land, lost to them forever, might well be named, "The Last Sigh of the Cavalier." A place of so great historic importance as the spot where the Treaty of Cahuenga was signed should be marked by a fitting monument to commemorate the event. Many of the Eastern States have spent thousands of dollars in erecting monuments and tablets to mark the positions of regiments in the great battles of the Civil War, and the general government has spent large sums in the purchase of the battlefields.

The forgotten landmark—The Deserted Ranch House of Cahuenga, was the arena of an event of vast importance not only in the history of California and the United States but in the history of civilization as well. Here the vanguard of two widely dissimilar civilizations met. More than three centuries before from the shores of Southern Europe came to the new world the Spanish conquistadors, bringing with them the cross and the sword—their mission to conquer and convert. A century later from the northern shores of Europe came the advance guard of the Anglo-Saxon army of conquest and civilization.

Two thousand miles apart each gains a foothold on the new world—the one on the fertile plains of Mexico—the other on the inhospitable shores of the North Atlantic. Westward with an ever increasing army, each marches to conquest. The effeminate but half civilized natives of the south are subjugated and the survivors absorbed into the civic system of their conquerors. The more war-

like aborigines of the north are conquered and exterminated. The conquerors reach the shores of the far Pacific and turn to meet. The Saxon, as of old, coming down from the North—the descendants of the Spanish Celt coming up from the South. The vanguard of these two widely dissimilar civilizations meet on the plains of Cahuenga and the Saxon is conqueror.

There is an innate savagery in the most enlightened people. The butcher bill of the battlefield is more interesting than the records of peaceful arbitration. Had the plains of Cahuenga been deluged by blood shed in a great battle, sculptured monuments would have been upreared to mark the spots of the greatest killing. But peace hath her victories as well as war, and she should have her monuments. If state pride or some other motive ever actuates our Legislators to redeem this historic spot from oblivion by erecting a suitable monument it would be a fitting tribute to a forgotten benefactor of the State—John C. Fremont—to place his statue on that monument. The man who inaugurated the movement that resulted in the acquisition of California, and who ended it by the treaty that brought peace to the territory is almost as completely forgotten by his State as the landmark where that treaty was made.

I have described the place where the capitulation or Treaty of Cahuenga was made as a forgotten landmark. It may be possible that among the few survivors of Fremont's Battalion there may be some one that could identify the place, or possibly some survivor of Pico's squadron could locate it. But when the few survivors of that historic event pass away the exact spot will be as difficult to locate as the birth-place of Homer.